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【第17話】七支刀

THIS IS GREAT.
I NEVER GET TIRED OF SEEING IT.
THE BEAUTIFUL SHAPE OF ANCIENT TIMES.

AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF DEDICATION, THE EXCAVATION OF THE ANCIENT TOMB THAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED HAS FINALLY BEEN ALLOWED!
YOU FINALLY DID IT, SENSEI!
IT'S A VICTORY FOR US INTELLECTUAL MINDS!
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バンザーイ
THEY GOT PERMISSION BECAUSE IT'S THE TOMB OF A LOCAL BARON.
OF COURSE NOT.
ALTHOUGH IT'S AN ANCIENT TOMB, IT'S NOT AN IMPERIAL MAUSOLEUM*, IS IT?

*Tomb of an Emperor

IMAGINE ALL THE TOMB FURNISHINGS AND MURALS! I'M EXPECTING GREAT THINGS!
THIS MIGHT BE *THE* EXCAVATION THAT WILL DRAW ATTENTION TO THE MYSTERIES OF ANCIENT TIMES!
HMPH I BET NOTHING SPECIAL WILL COME OF IT
EVEN A BRONZE MIRROR WOULD BE IMPRESSIVE
DON'T JUST SAY WHATEVER YOU PLEASE ...
WHO DO YOU THINK THIS TOMB BELONGS TO?!
THE PERSON WHO.
BUILT THIS TOMB, ISN'T IT?

LET'S TALK ABOUT TOMORROW'S JOURNEY
COME HERE, WAKEHIKO-KUN
FOR SOMEONE SO YOUNG, YOU SPEAK QUITE OLD-FASHIONED
I'M REPAIRING A SWORD AS AN ERRAND FOR MY GRAND-FATHER.
AH/
MY FAMILY ARE ACTUAL SWORD-SMITHS.
WE'RE THE NARI-KAWA FAMILY FROM THE NEIGHBOR-ING TOWN.
YOU WERE LOOKING AT THE TOMB FOR A FULL HOUR, WEREN'T YOU?
ARE YOU FROM AROUND HERE?
THE BUS IS HERE, SO I'LL BE GOING
SWORD.. SMITHS..

A SWORD ...
A SWORD ...
I WANT YOU TO CHECK THIS FOR ME, WAKEHIKO-KUN.
HEY!
WE'RE GOING TO NEED A LOT OF WORKERS STARTING TOMORROW
WE'VE GOT TO CUT DOWN THE TREES WHICH ARE IN THE WAY, TOO
I WONDER IF WE WILL FIND ONE THE TOMB BELONGS TO A NAMELESS BARON, YOU SEE
IF WE FIND A COFFIN IN THE TOMB, THEN WE SHOULD LET SENSEI TAKE A LOOK FIRST.

THERE'S NO REASON FOR YOU TO BE SO INSULTING
THAT SWORD...
THAT'S RIGHT... WITHOUT THAT SWORD
EXCUSE ME
IS THIS THE HOME OF THE SWORD SMITH NARI-KAWA?
I CAME HERE BECAUSE I HEARD THAT YOU WERE A MASTER SWORDSMITH
I WOULD LIKE YOU TO MAKE THIS SWORD FOR US.
THAT'S...!

A RUBBING OF THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD?
NO, WAIT...
THIS IS A REPRODUCTION OF MY CLAN'S TREASURED SWORD...
JUDGING BY THIS PAPER AND INK, IT SEEMS TO BE QUITE OLD—
NO, THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE...
A COMPLETE RUBBING...
HAVE YOU UNDERSTOOD HOW VALUABLE THAT SWORD IS?

KOGURYO
PAEKCHE
SILLA
THE SMALL COUNTRY OF *PAEKCHE*, LOCATED IN THE ANCIENT KOREAN PENINSULA, WAS PRESSURED BY *KOGURYO* AND *SILLA*.
IT'S BURIED IN THE TABOOED LAND OF THE *ISONOKAMI SHRINE*, WHICH HAS A LONG HISTORY.
THERE'S ONLY ONE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD IN JAPAN.
THE KING OF PAEKCHE OCCASSIONALLY HAD TO SEND LUXURIOUS OFFERINGS TO ITS IMPERIAL COURT.
TO AVOID BEING INVADED, PAEKCHE NEEDED MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM YAMATO*
AMONG THOSE WAS THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD, WHICH WAS SAID TO BE THE GREATEST OF TREASURES
THE BRILLIANT, MYSTERIOUS LOOKING SWORD WAS CREATED WITH IRONMAKING TECHNIQUES NOT KNOWN IN JAPAN AT THAT TIME
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE PEOPLE THEN WERE SURPRISED AND CHARMED BY IT.

*Ancient name of Japan

THERE'S NO WAY SUCH A DETAILED RUBBING COULD EXIST.
THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD WAS FOUND TOGETHER WITH MANY OTHER TREASURES, MAKING IT A HISTORICAL DISCOVERY.
THERE WERE FEW MENTIONS OF IT IN THE HISTORY BOOKS AS THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD, BUT I HADN'T BELIEVED THAT IT WAS REAL.
IN 187H, WHEN THE CHIEF PRIEST HAD THE TABOOED LAND EXCAVATED,
OUR LORD'S NAME WILL BE DEFILED WITHOUT THIS SWORD!
YOU CANNOT REFUSE!
HOWEVER, I CANNOT ACCEPT.
THE METHOD OF CREATING THIS SWORD IS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME.
WHAT WAS THAT SOUND?
DOES DAD HAVE A VISITOR?

I RAISED MY VOICE WITHOUT THINKING.
AH.
HE SAID HE WOULDN'T MAKE THE SWORD I WANT.
WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?!
DAD?
WE'LL COME AGAIN WHEN THE SWORDSMITH CHANGES HIS MIND.
WAIT.

KOMRP
HURRY AND LEAVE THROUGH THE WINDOW!
YOUNG MASTER!
RUN AWAY, YOUNG MASTER!
COME WITH US.
WE'RE DEFINITELY GOING TO MAKE THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD.

HOLD ON, FATHER!
DAD!
DAD...!
GRANDPA!

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THANKS TO YOU CALLING OUT TO ME,
I FOUND A WAY TO RETURN THE SWORD.
THANK YOU.

YOU'RE FROM...
THE EXCAVATION TEAM, AREN'T YOU?
HEH.
I AM THE GUARDIAN OF THAT TOMB.
THE CLAN FOUNDED BY THE CHIEF WHO IS AT REST IN THAT TOMB STILL SURVIVES TODAY.
THEY HAVE BLENDED INTO SOCIETY AND CARRIED OUT RITUALS.

LISTEN CAREFULLY OUR CHIEF WAS A GREAT MAN
HE COMMANDED MANY NATURALISED JAPANESE PEOPLE AND CREATED A NEW INDUSTRY.
THIS BENEFITED THE IMPERIAL COURT AND SUPPORTED THE NATION'S STRENGTH FROM THE SHADOWS,
BUT HE WAS UNFORTUNATELY FORCED OUT OF HIS POSITION DUE TO A FALSE ACCUSATION.
NOW, THAT TOMB IS ALL
THAT REMAINS OF OUR PROSPERITY
AH, IT MUST HAVE BEEN WONDERFUL
THE TALES OF THE GRAND CEREMONY AT THE TIME OUR CHIEF WAS BURIED WHICH WERE HANDED DOWN BY THE GUARDIANS OF THE TOMB

IN A LAND FAR FROM THE CITY,
A MAGNIFICENT CEREMONY WAS HELD, SOMETHING THAT THE NOBLES FROM THE CITY COULD NOT DREAM TO REPRODUCE.
YOUNG PEOPLE CLAD IN BRIGHT CLOTHES CARRIED OFFERINGS.
THE GREAT BURIAL MOUND FIGURINES WERE NEATLY PLACED ON THE SHINING CHALKY MOUND
THE EARTH WAS PRESSED DOWN AND WHITE STONES WERE LAID ON TOP

WAIT.
THERE'S ONLY ONE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD IN JAPAN/ THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY OTHERS THAN THE ONE PRESENTED TO THE IMPERIAL COURT.
THE GREATEST SHOUTS OF JOY
WERE WHEN THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD WAS HELD UP HIGH AND LAID TO REST IN THE BURIAL CHAMBER.
BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE TECHNIQUES TO CREATE IT.
THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD WAS PRESENTED TO THE IMPERIAL COURT AS AN OFFERING,
HE HE

HOWEVER, MANY GENERATIONS LATER, OUR CLAN, WHICH SUPPORTED THE NATURALISED JAPANESE PEOPLE,
SECRETLY SUMMONED THE IRONWORKERS IN ADVANCE OF THE IMPERIAL COURT OF YAMATO,
THOSE WHO WORK WITH IRON CONROL THE MILITARY FORCE.
CREATING GOOD QUALITY IRON AND THE METALLURGIC TECHNIQUES OF IRONWARE WERE THE GREATEST SECRET OF THE CONTINENT
AND HAD THEM CREATE ANOTHER SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD.

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Al-right
THE ONLY PROBLEM IS THAT HIS BLOOD PRESSURE IS A LITTLE HIGH.
BUT WE'LL DO A CT SCAN TOMORROW JUST IN CASE.
WAS AKIRA IN?
ABOUT THAT...
HE DIDN'T ANSWER THE TELEPHONE OR HIS CELL PHONE.
DON'T GET ANGRY, PAPA
WHAT...
WHAT IS HE DOING AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!
IT WAS YOU...
YOU TOOK AKIRA AWAY, DIDN'T YOU?

FATHER!
Ugh..
THAT UNUSUAL PRESENCE! THE ONE WHO CAME TO ASK FOR A SWORD...
WAS HUMAN, YET INHUMAN.
DON'T HURT AKIRA, YOU GHOST!
IF YOU WON'T MAKE THE SWORD
I'LL BRING YOU TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD. DECIDE CAREFULLY.

MOVE!
AGREES TO FOLLOW OUR ORDERS
WE'LL KEEP YOU HOSTAGE UNTIL YOUR GRAND-FATHER
ORDERS ...?
GETTING MY GRAND-FATHER TO MAKE THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD?
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY GRANDFATHER BEFORE YOU CAPTURED ME?
YOU PROBABLY DID SOMETHING TERRIBLE DIDN'T YOU?
WE WERE THE ONES WHO HAD SOMETHING TERRIBLE DONE TO US
IN ORDER TO TELL FUTURE GENERATIONS HOW GREAT OUR LORD WAS,

OUR CLAN CONTINUED THE RITUALS WITHOUT FAIL.
BUT AT THAT TIME...
THE SACRED TOMB WAS DEFILED BY SOMEONE!
S-STOP... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD WAS STOLEN.
BUT THE SWORD WAS TAKEN AWAY
THEY DIDN'T LAY A HAND ON ANYTHING ELSE...

OUR MASTER'S BODY, DISGRACED! NOW...
THE PRIDE OF OUR CLAN AND SYMBOL OF PROSPERITY WAS STOLEN!
IT'S INCREDIBLY SHAMEFUL. IT'S DISRESPECTFUL TO OUR MASTER.
THE BURIAL WITHOUT A SWORD WILL BE EXPOSED TO THE PUBLIC!
YOU WILL ACCOMPANY US UNTIL WE OBTAIN THE SWORD.
THE PATH.
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PUTTING A NEW SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD IN THE TOMB IS JUST STRANGE!
WOULDN'T THAT ALSO DISGRACE YOUR MASTER'S NAME?
HOWEVER, YOU CANNOT SEE
THE SOLDIERS LINED UP ON THE CHALKY HILLS, STRENGTHENING THE DEFENSE
THE SOLDIERS KNOW THE OLD WAYS
THE EYES OF THE TOMB GUARDIAN CAN CLEARLY SEE
THE CURSE THAT SURROUNDS THIS TOMB

YOU'RE NOT SEEING IT, EITHER
THE FIGURE OF THE LOST SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD.

OPEN THE TOMB AND STEAL THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD! DEFILE HIS HONOR!
THEY TOOK THEIR TIME AND PLACED A TRAITOR AMONGST THE TOMB GUARDIANS.
THAT WAS THE ORDER GIVEN BY THE CHIEF OF THE BARONIAL FAMILY WHO HAD BEEN TRICKED AND ENVIED THE PROPSERITY OF YOUR CLAN.
THEN STOLE THE PRECIOUS SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD, BURYING IT AT A FAR AWAY SHRINE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT...?
THERE'S NO WAY YOU WOULD KNOW ABOUT THAT...

THEN TELL ME,
TELL ME THE NAME OF THAT PERSON!
I'LL ALSO CHANT
THE CEREMONIAL INCANTATION THAT ONLY YOU KNOW.

WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU?!
HOW... HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
I KNOW.. THAT FOREST...
WAIT.. I..
WE WILL.. BRING BACK.. THE SWORD..
ALTHOUGH THE GUARDIAN OF THE TOMB CAN SEE THE BURIAL MOUND FIGURINES, HE CANNOT SEE ME
THIS DAY IS FINALLY HERE.
I WONDER IF THE CLAY FIGURINES WILL FIND ME
SO YOU'LL BE HELPING ME, AKIRA!

SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD
WAKE-HIKO—
WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU—
IT WAS THERE!
IT WAS THERE, WAKEHIKO!
DEEP UNDER-GROUND!

THIS IS THE LONG LOST SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD...
THIS IS.
UGH...!
ALRIGHT, WE'RE GOING
YOU'LL LEAD THE WAY. TAKE THE SWORD
EH?

YES.
WILL YOU BE ALRIGHT WITHOUT YOUR GLASSES?
FOLLOW ME, AKIRA.
I CAN CLEARLY SEE BECAUSE YOU'RE SO BRIGHT.
YOU'VE BECOME ONE WITH THE SWORD AND IT'S ENCHANTING.
WHEN I WAS WAITING AT A BUS STOP IN MY FOURTH YEAR OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME I'M SURE IT WAS WHEN...

WHAT'S THE MATTER, MISTER?
DO YOU WANT TO GO OVER THERE?
YOU WERE AT THE FENCE SURROUNDING THE POND, GAZING AT THE TOMB WITH A WORRIED LOOK ON YOUR FACE.
CAN YOU SEE ME?
MY SWORD FORM .
I'M INCREDIBLY WORRIED ABOUT MY MASTER
SOME DISHONEST PEOPLE HAVE HIDDEN ME FAR AWAY
MY HOME IS INSIDE THERE

COME HERE OFTEN AND REMEMBER IT BY EAR!
IT'LL BE NECESSARY FOR WHEN I RETURN TO THE TOMB ONE DAY
BUT ANCIENT INCANTATIONS ARE DIFFICULT!
THOSE ARE IMPORTANT WORDS. YOU MUSTN'T WRITE DOWN!
"THAT IS..." WAIT, ONE MORE TIME!
I HOPE THIS WILL BE USEFUL
WHO KNOWS?
WHERE IS HE NOW?
WAKEHIKO? WHO'S THAT?
TELL THAT INCANTATION AND MY LOCATION TO WAKEHIKO

SO I SOMETIMES CAME TO THE TOMB
AND WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO MEET THE GUARDIAN OF THE TOMB, WAKEHIKO...
AKIRA! WAKEHIKO IS HERE, BEHIND YOU!
DON'T TELL HIM THE INCANTATION YET! GET HIM TO TRUST YOU!
TELL HIM YOUR FAMILY ARE GREAT SWORDSMITHS!
WAKEHIKO WILL BECOME IMPATIENT. HE'LL DEFINITELY COME AND SEE YOU!
HEHE, I CAN TELL HOW THE GUARDIAN OF THE TOMB WILL REACT
DID YOU KNOW HE'D KIDNAPPED ME?
THE INCANTATION WE PRACTICED WAS PERFECT, TOO!
YOU'RE A GOOD BOY, AKIRA

AH..
AFTER PASSING THROUGH HERE, THE GUARDIANS OF THE TOMB CONTINUED THE CEREMONY
WON'T IT BE DISCOVERED WHEN THE EXCAVATION HAPPENS?
IT'S ALRIGHT THAT'S WHY WAKEHIKO IS A MEMBER OF THE EXCAVATION TEAM
EH?!
ずさっ
MODERN CLOTHES ARE UNCOMFORTABLE
I WENT OUT FOR FUN

AKIRA WAS AN INTERESTING PERSON.
DON'T GET ANY FINGER-PRINTS ON THE SWORD.
IT'LL CAUSE TROUBLE LATER ON.
COME ON, PUT THAT SWORD OVER HERE
GIVE THOSE CLOTHES BACK TO WAKEHIKO.
THIS IS A PIECE OF THE GOLD INLAY FROM THE SWORD
IT'LL LIGHT YOUR PATH HOME
TAKE IT.

MASTER, NOW THE WORLD WILL KNOW OF YOUR GREATNESS
NOW THIS PLACE CAN BE EXCAVATED AT ANY TIME.
MY SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD HAS BEEN RETURNED
THE NEXT TIME WE MEET,
AKIRA, I MIGHT BE A NATIONAL TREASURE
PLEASE PROTECT THE MASTER AND THE SEVEN BRANCHED SWORD AFTER THE EXCAVATION, TOO
Hi
THIS IS YOURS.
WAKE-HIKO-SAN, WAKE UP.
I'LL ALSO BE STRONGER THE NEXT TIME WE MEET.
YOU IDIOT!
END